

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Death Conqueror

Scripture: John 19:30-20:10

Code: 1576

As we come in our message this morning, we invite you to turn in your Bibles to John 19. We have been in a series in John now for a long time, and we just continue in our series this morning right along as we have been going through the nineteenth chapter, We arrive today at the marvelous account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His tremendous power over death. I trust that God shall bless your heart as you are attentive not to what I may say but what the Spirit of God may be able to say through me to you this morning A recent report tells us that teenagers think about death on an average of once every five minutes. Death is a problem to man because it's an item over which man has no control. The body of a 48yearold man, for example, was taken recently to Long Island after the man's death to be placed in a body capsule so that he could be brought back to life in the future when the particular disease which he had also had a cure. The man, Andrew ?? of ??, New York, died of an apparent heart attack. Under a prearranged plan his body was packed in ice and rock salt for a trip to the funeral home in St, James. Now this is available to anybody and everybody today through the

..n is a process by which bodies are

Society, Inc.

frozen in a body capsule, a kind of a medical thermos bottle, until such a time as the disease cure is found; and then the person is brought back, supposedly the disease cured, and the individual can be resurrected. Now this gives us a little bit of an idea about :he intensity with which some men look at death and the tremendous desire to live even to that degree. I understand that it costs \$10000 for the initial freeze and then subsequent costs from then on for storage and certain other things. Checking into it here in the San Fernando Valley at one particular cemetery we have a storage place for the

Society to store their body capsules. In fact, if you so choose, you may have the body of your dear departed placed upright in a transparent tank in formaldehyde so that from time to time you may even greet him face to face. In addition to the initial \$10,000 charge, however, there will be a charge of \$1500 every couple of months to drain the tank and refill it with fresh formaldehyde. The idea of all this is so we can preserve ourselves hopefully until the day when the whole problem of death can be even pushed further away and someone could come back to life and live a little longer. Death is a troublesome subject. Death alone knows its moment. Man can't conquer death, Consequently as the Bible indicates in Heb 2:15 man lives all his life in the bondage of the fear of death. 'hey are bound by

that fear, So the question that is the ultimate question is the question that Job asks, If a man die, shall he live again? That's man's ultimate question, It's the question that G. B. Hardy asks when he says, I have two questions. Has anybody ever cheated death? Number two, Did they make a way for me to cheat it?

The question that grinds away in the heart of every man, every tanager, every person that lives is, Can death be conquered? Is there an escape by which we can overcome death?

Dear ones, we believe Easter answers that question because Jesus promised, Because I live, ye shall live also. Jesus claimed to have complete power over death, He claimed to be able not only to conquer death but to control death for His own purposes not only for Himself but for every man. Because of that the fear of death is removed, and we can say with the apostle Paul, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Our passage today which we are going to look at in verse 30 on, is a thrilling and powerful record of Jesus conquering death. It indicates to us from three great facts the tremendous, overwhelming power that Jesus had, not only in conquering death, but in controlling it for His own purposes, In these verses you will find that Jesus Christ is presented as the majestic, sovereign, death conqueror, Now let me give it to you in a general view to begin with, In looking at this rather lengthy passage, and we are going to get through this lengthy passage because it is narrative, we find that it falls easily into three sections, Each of these sections deals with a particular facet of Jesus' power over death, All three put together show His total control of death. Now there is one other thing that we need to consider here at the very beginning, and that is, John is concerned as he writes this gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he is concerned that we see the deity of Jesus Christ. From the beginning of John's gospel to the end, John's point is to present Christ as God. He is not so concerned with the humanity of Jesus but with the deity of Christ, He wants us to recognize that He is God. So from the first chapter to the last chapter he calls all the possible evidence that he can muster and submits it to us to prove that Jesus is God. Here in this particular section he pulls together Jesus' power over death as a great climactic proof that He is in fact God, for He can do what no man can do, He can control death. Not only do we see that, but we see woven throughout this passage in all of the areas of Jesus, control over death the fulfilling of specific prophecy. One of the great reasons we believe that Jesus is God and that He is in fact the Messiah that He claimed to be is because to the very letter He fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. So we have in this passage not only the evidence of His power over death to prove that He is God but the evidence of a specific and accurate fulfillment of detailed prophecy to prove doubly that He is God. When the evidence is all in, we shall be able to say with the centurion, Truly this Man was the Son of God, and with Thomas, My Lord and My God! .So woven into the text of resurrection power is fulfilled prophecy, and the tapestry both together is glorious.

I want to show you three progressive revelations of Christ's power over death. The three progressive revelations of Christ's power over death: We see His power over death in His dying, we see His power over death in His burial, we see His power over death in His resurrection, In each of these three and progressively unfolding until the final one is just dynamic beyond the others is the power of Jesus over death; and woven into it, the fulfillment of prophecy. Twentyeight specific prophecies about the sufferings of Jesus have already been fulfilled, In a 24hour period leading up to and including His death on the cross there were 28 specific Old Testament prophecies fulfilled to the letter, and in addition to that, there were many types fulfilled. Now as we see Jesus Christ conquer death, we are going to see some additional fulfillment of prophecy doubly verifying to us that He is in fact God.

First of all then let's notice His dying. We'll see how that in His dying He reveals His power over death. Let me preface it as we look at verse 30 in a moment by setting it up a little bit. The fear of death, that which haunts us about death, is the unexpected character of death. Right? That's what it is that kind of irritates us and leaves us with anxiety. It is even indicated to us psychologically that people commit suicide because they are afraid of death, That may seem incongruous; it is not. They are afraid of the unexpected character of death. Consequently very often suicide is committed in an attempt to escape the unexpected so that people can die when they want to die and not become victims of the fear of death that comes in surprise. So people may even kill themselves because they are afraid of the unexpected moment and they desire to rob death of the fear hold on them by killing themselves when they get ready to die. All men to some extent are afraid of death. Death you see messes up everything, to put it mildly. Whenever a person dies, there is always that undone task; there is always that unspoken love, that forgiveness that was never made right. There is always that which wasn't accomplished and death tears people away from the undone. The fear of death, my friends, is the surprise of it, the shock of it, the suddenness of it, the unexpected character of it.

But, my friends, it is just in that case that Jesus had no fear of death for death was no shock to Him. Jesus Himself said and said as clearly as could be said in John 10:17-18 these words, "Therefore doth my Father love me,..." Listen. "because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of Myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Death could not surprise Jesus; He controlled death. Jesus died only when He commanded death to take His life; death could not take Him apart from His own will. With that in ' mind, look at John 19:30. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, tetelestai, It is finished: and he bowed his head,..." And that in the Greek means He pillowed His head as it were on a pillow. And yielded up His Spirit.

In verse 28 Jesus recognized that all the prophecy was fulfilled up until His death, except for one. The one unfulfilled prophecy was the prophecy that He would drink vinegar.

Knowing that yet He had to fulfill one prophecy, He said, I thirst. They gave Him the vinegar. Verse 30, when He had received the vinegar, He said, tetelestai, it is done. I have fulfilled every prophecy. I have accomplished the sin bearing. I have bruised the serpent's head. Having said, It is finished, there was no sudden jerk, no jolt, there was no slumping of the head, He gently in full control pillowed His head as it were in sleep and yielded up His Spirit. Jesus died totally controlling His own death; He was no victim. This gives you the first indication of the overwhelming power that Jesus had over death itself. Many times in His life death had tried to take Him. Satan had sent death after Jesus time and again, trying to throw Him off a cliff, trying to have Him stoned but never could Satan accomplish it. Never could death lay a hand on Jesus until He said, tetelestai, It is finished. When it was done, then He Himself called death and yielded Himself to His death. No one took His life from Him; He willingly yielded it.

So we see to begin with Jesus, tremendous control over death in that He never is a victim, death cannot surprise Him, there is no such thing as an unexpected death for Jesus. He did not die as a victim, He was not killed by the Romans in the sense of their bringing about His death against His will; He died purely and simply because He said, Death, now you may take Me, and death did. He controlled His own death; it was no surprise. He was death's Master.

Now I want you to see something that is absolutely fantastic at this point. Jesus died at the very split second that it was determined that He would die by God in the ages past, Jesus was on a divine timetable and before this thing unfolds this morning, you are going to see what I mean, Jesus died at three o'clock. Now it's very abnormal for an individual who is crucified to die that soon, very soon. In fact the thieves are still living when Jesus is dead. You say, Yeah, but Jesus went through the scourging. So did the thieves, It was common custom that anyone crucified was scourged prior to the crucifixion so they had been through the same agony and the same pain and the same thing that Jesus had been through. You say, Maybe Jesus was weaker than they. Not so. The body Jesus Christ never knew disease the Bible tells us in Hebrews. The body of Jesus Christ never knew sin. Therefore the body of Jesus Christ was spared from human infirmity and the marks of sin, and I believe the body of Jesus Christ was the finest human physique that has ever been on the earth, Consequently it was not because He was physically weak; it was not because He was scourged that He died so soon for scourged, crucified 'victims often lived as long as three days before they died; He died so soon because He was operating on a divine calendar and a divine clock and it was time to die. Thus He controlled His death and fitted it into God's eternal plan. He died when it was time to die. Let me show you what I mean, John 19:31. "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away,"

Now note at the beginning of verse 31 it says, "The Jews,...preparation." Now we believe that the preparation is the day before Sabbath. We also believe that it's the day before Passover, so this is a

special Sabbath, this is a very high day, this is Passover Sabbath.

They would not leave His body on the cross on the high day, the Sabbath; they would not leave His body on the cross on any Sabbath; more than that, according to Deut. 21:22-23 the instruction of the Word of God says that if anyone commits a crime worthy of death and is hanged, his body is not to hang over night. It is to be removed at the evening if he is hanged on a tree. So they, desiring to apply this Deuteronomy passage at this point, desire to have Jesus removed before the Passover began. Now keep in mind that this is Friday, it is three o'clock; Jesus is dead; when the night falls the Passover begins; therefore the body must be removed quickly for Passover is coming as evening is coming. So the Jews* not wanting to have the body of Jesus Christ there on the Sabbath, especially the Passover and over night, desire to remove Him. Here, you see, t:y friends, you have the scrupulous observance of the law. Here are these Jewish leaders, They don't bother to give chapter and verse for their request, but they want to be sure that they keep the minutia of the law while they kill the One Who fulfilled it. This is the insidiousness of legalism. They have allowed the Son of God to die and now they are scrupulously sure to maintain the form of their religion while the One Who fulfills their religion dies. Se it's getting later in the afternoon, and so they are very, very anxious that He be removed, So what they did in order to make sure He could be removed, as well as the other thieves, was they went to Pilate in verse 31, and they besought Pilate that their legs might be broken,...," The custom was that if someone was dying of crucifix and it was slow that they could speed it up by breaking his legs. This was the method.

Verse 32, "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him." Now they broke the two thieves* legs. The word break in the Greek means to shiver to pieces. This was not simply a oneshot situation; this was where a large mallet was taken and the legs were shattered completely, shivered to pieces, The tremendous pain and agony, the tremendous trauma after the elimination of the only support that had held the individual up on the cross, resulted in the slumping of the body, the intensifying of pain, the suffocation of the internal organs, the trauma from the pain of the breaking of the bones then brought death on rather swiftly. So the Jews, not wanting the bodies hanging in the Passover time, besought Pilate that he would send his soldiers to smash their legs, shiver them to pieces, So the soldiers came, in verse 32, and rushed the legs of the thieves, But then we read verse 33. Listen to it, "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:" They came to Jesus, and there was no need to break His legs because He was already dead. This was so unnatural. Clear back in Mark 15:44 Pilate was shocked.. It says this, "And Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead,"

Pilate was shocked that anybody would die so soon after being crucified so Pilate is unbelieving at this point and he asks the centurion, Has He been dead for a long time? This is so unusual to die so soon, But you see He died for the simple reason that His work was done, and for the second reason, that He had to be dead in order to accomplish the Father as stated in prophecy, I'll show you what I

mean by that. If Jesus had not died when He did, they would have broken His legs. They would have taken the mallet and they would have shattered His legs. If that had happened, my dear friends, if they had broken one single bone in one leg of Jesus, you could take your Bible and throw it away because God would be a liar.

You say, What do you mean by that? I mean just this. In Num 9:12 the Bible says that the Passover lamb that was given on the Passover sacrifice, it says of the Passover lamb, this, that not a bone of the Passover lamb should be broken. Who is the perfect Passover Lamb? Jesus Christ. In order to be the perfect Passover lamb, He could not have a bone broken.

Beyond that, Psalm 34:20 says this, speaking of the death of Jesus Christ, "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." If one bone of the legs of Jesus had been broken, God is a liar, the prophecy has been broken with that bone, you can throw away your Bible; but not one was broken! Now do you see why Jesus had to die in the split second that He did before the soldiers arrived with the mallet to crush His legs? To fulfill prophecy, Jesus controlled His death down to the very minutia so that every tiny piece of prophecy was done. He sandwiched in between the final prophecy, I thirst; and the next prophecy of the smashing of His bones not happening, His death, right in the middle where it had to fit. Anywhere else then it would have broken the chain of God's prophetic truth.

That's why John 19:36 says, "For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled* A bone of him shall not be broken."

So Jesus controlled death not only to show us He was God but to fulfill prophecy and doubly show us His deity. Incidentally, that's also good proof that He was really dead. You hear all these modern day critics say, Jesus was never dead. He just went into a swoon. When He got in the grave the coolness spices and the ointment revived Him and He jumped up and walked away. These Roman executioners were trained men. They knew who was dead and they knew who was alive. The first great proof that Jesus was dead was the fact that they saw that He was dead. They were not Christians. They were not trying to prove that He was really dead; they were strictly Roman soldiers. They were trained observers of who died on a cross, and they said, He's dead. But just to make sure because it was so strange that He would die so soon, a soldier rammed a spear deep into His side, verse 34. "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith (immediately) came there out blood and water," You see, they couldn't believe that He was dead so soon, even though they knew He was, they decided just to verify it and if there was any life left, they would be sure to eliminate it at that point, So evidently the soldier in his right hand took the spear and rammed it into the side of Jesus as He was hanging on the cross, piercing deep into His side, He did this just to be sure that if there were any lingering doubt about whether or not He was dead, this would seal it for good, Isn't that marvelous that that soldier did that? Because if you look down in verse 37, it says it again, "And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they what? pierced." Zech 12:10. Dear old prophet Zechariah looked hundreds of years into the future under the inspiration of

God and said some day the Messiah will be pierced.

You don't think that Roman soldier knew that, do you? You see, Jesus controlled every detail. Watch this, If Jesus had not died when He did, the first prophecy would have been destroyed because they would have shattered His legs. If they had shattered His legs, they then would have had no reason to pierce Him with a spear and the second one would have been broken. So Jesus died on divine schedule exactly at the very moment so that they would not break His legs and knowing that to make sure He was dead, they would ram a spear into His side, perfectly and accurately to the very letter fulfilling the prophecy, .

Now when I say Jesus controlled His own dying, now you know what I mean, don't you? Perfectly timed it so that it would fulfill the prophecy. This is also another proof that He was dead. Look what happened in verse 34, "...and forthwith (immediately) came there out blood and water." This proves to us that He was not dead from the spear wound but that He was already dead when the spear went in, You say, What's the significance of blood and water? You can find as many commentators and as many Christian preachers and teachers and you can probably find just about that many theories as to what the blood and water is. Let me give you mine, I will not be totally dogmatic; but since I have that option this morning, you must listen And decide for yourself. Here is the explanation that I lean toward. The physiological explanation apparently as far as I can see it is that Jesus died from a ruptured heart in consequence of the tremendous agony and the tremendous sorrow that He was undergoing. If you know anything about psychology at all, you know that mental anguish can affect the bodily organs, You know that stress and anxiety and worry and all kinds of fears and guilts have tremendous effects upon the physical body. So you must be aware of this: That Jesus Christ on that cross was undergoing guilt and stress and anxiety and pain and anguish and sin brought together from every human being that would ever exist in the history of the world and laid on Him; and my friends, no human heart can handle that. People have heart attacks for less severe things than that by an infinite measurement. Here is Jesus Christ enduring what no human heart could ever handle. Consequently I believe that heart ruptured. That heart muscle ruptured. When it happens, such death would be instant. Doctors tell us that blood flowing into the pericardium, which is the sack about the heart, would coagulate; then in a separated way the blood, the red clot, and the liquid serum, or the water, would then be separated and when the spear was jammed into His side, at that point the separation would be visible, indicating that the heart had indeed ruptured, There have been many physicians who have held this view. Recently Dr, Stuart Bergsma of Grand Rapids 1 Michigan, says this: "It is extremely rare, it is well nigh impossible for the normal heart muscle to rupture. Christ, however, suffered as no man has before or since suffered,"

I say as I said before, No human heart ever made could handle the anxiety and the pain and the sin and the guilt that Jesus had on Him; and His heart burst under that pressure.

You say, That's all conjecture. You don't have any proof for it. I am going to do the best I can. Turn to Psalm 69:21, It says this, Psalm 69:21. is detailing His crucifixion by prophecy. Notice how accurate it is. "They gave me also gall for my meat (food);

Now is it true on the cross at the beginning of His crucifixion they offered Him gall to drink? To kind of soothe a little bit? It is indeed, is it not? They did offer Him gall, which is a kind of sedative to ease the pain, Did He take it? No. It doesn't say He took it; it says they gave (offered) me gall, That's very accurate, and that we take literally, don't we? They actually offered Him gall. Second part of verse 21: "and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Is that true of the cross? Did they give Him vinegar to drink? Is that to be taken literally? Absolutely. The gall is literal and so is the vinegar. Now jump back to: the beginning of verse 2 and listen to (this: "Reproach hath broken what? My heart;...", " If we can take verse 21 literally, can we take verse 20 literally? Can we believe that Jesus Christ actually died from a ruptured heart? Can we believe that the Old Testament when speaking about the seat of the emotions of a man did not use the word heart but used what word? the bowels. Why then the word heart here? Maybe to direct us to a literal understanding that Jesus actually died of a broken heart, ruptured because of the pain and the anguish of sin that no human heart could ever handle, So we believe that perhaps that's what meant when it says, When they pierced His side the blood and water flowed, indicating the rupture of the heart muscles and the dividing of the blood and the serum in two parts, So Jesus died.

You say, Why is it so important to go into all this detail? It's so important, my dear friends, because this is what Scripture said would happen. The Bible said that Jesus would not have a bone broken, and He did not, The Bible said He would be pierced with a spear, but it did not say that would kill Him, It said in Psalm 69 that it would be that heart that would be broken, When the spear went in, it revealed that heart had been ruptured. Every single, tiny little detail of prophecy in the Old Testament was fulfilled to the very letter in Jesus Christ's death, He knew every thing that He was doing, and He was controlling death in every move. You say, What's John's point? look at it in John 19:35 "And he that saw it..." That's John, the writer. "bare record (bore witness), and his record (witness) is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might what? believe."

Believe what? What has John wanted us to believe all through this book? That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, that's what he wants us to believe. You say, How does this prove that He is? Number one, control over death. Number two, fulfilled prophecy. John says, I was there; I saw that. I saw they didn't break His legs. I saw they put a spear in His side. I saw the blood and water. I saw fulfilled prophecy, and I say this to you and my witness is true, and I say it that you might believe. Do you believe? Do you believe He is God? How else could He control death and call it to act in His purpose?

Then verses 36 and 37. We've already read "For these things were done* that the Scripture should be fulfilled A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith,..." ?h, is that ever

good, It doesn't say another Scripture is fulfilled, does it? Because that Scripture, "They shall look on him whom they pierced," is not fulfilled. The piercing is fulfilled; but when it says "They shall look on him whom they pierced," it's talking about the conversion of Israel during the time of the Tribulation and so it doesn't say it's been fulfilled. It says, "...another Scripture saith,..." Do you know the Bible picks exactly the right words for everything? That's because God wrote every word. So we see in the opening statement of verses 31-37 the tremendous power of Jesus over death in His dying.

Secondly and quickly we'll see this one. We see the control of Jesus over death in His burial. Hang onto this one. It's one thing to control your dying; it's something else to control your burial, Right? Think about that, You may be able to kind of bring about your own death; but in terms of controlling what they do with your body when you're dead, that's out of sight. No man has ever been able to do that. I want you to watch how Jesus, while dead, controls everything that is done. That's because. Peter says He died by the flesh :but was alive in the Spirit. He was still alive spiritually.

New Am, S. translation is accurate. Isaiah 53:

Now look at this. Isaiah 53:9, the prophet said, (NAS) His grave was assigned , to be with wicked men. That's right, isn't it? You don't bury a criminal with rich men, He was to be thrown in the graves with the criminals. But watch this. .His grave was assigned to be with wicked men, yet He was with the rich man in His death, Now that's a prophecy of the death of Christ, You say, Wait a minute. We've got a problem here.

There aren't any rich disciples, That's true. As far as we know at this point there aren't any rich disciples, How in the world is Jesus going to get buried with the rich?

And if the Jewish leaders get hold of His body, they're certainly not going to put Him in a rich man's grave, What in the world is Christ going to do to control this? He'll be taken by the Jews because they are the ones who want to get Him down and He'll be thrown in an evildoer's grave. How in the world will Isaiah's prophecy be fulfilled?

Is there any way possible? Watch this. Fantastic. John 19:38. "And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews? besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus," This guy is something else. A rich disciple, and he's been a secret disciple, Now it's bad when rich disciples are also secret disciples. We want rich disciples to declare themselves! But here is this man, Joseph of Arimathea. He's a rich man, and he's also been a secret disciple, He's a sinful, cowardly man. He, a been hiding, you know, because he didn't want to state his faith in Christ; he would be unsynagogued. He knew that. That's excommunicated in Jewish terminology. He would be put out of the life of his people, and he was no smalltime operator, He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the 70 ruling elders of the whole nation of Israel, He had been in on the trial of Jesus and had been a no

vote, but he was still secret. But Jesus, even while He's dead, moves into the heart of Joseph and directs him to go and get the body of Christ. Jesus, while dead, controls Joseph and Joseph's deeds, Can you imagine? This is unbelievable, If this guy was a coward when Jesus is alive, how in the world does he become a hero at this point? I mean, when all of the heroes have fled, why is the coward coming to the fore?

The Bible says When the shepherd is smitten, the sheep will be scattered. We saw that fulfilled, How in the world do we get this guy who has been a coward all along turned into a hero? I'll tell you how, Divine grace and activity on his heart, Jesus moved into his heart* and He couldn't wait. Jesus couldn't give the guy three days to debate about it. I mean he had to just get it and move because it was getting to be sundown and it was going to be the Sabbath; and Jesus had to be in that grave before the Sabbath.

So Jesus even while dead moves upon Joseph of Arimathea. Arimathea is a little place north of Jerusalem, maybe 25 miles. The four gospels put together tell us several things about Joseph. He was rich, devout, good, righteous, a counselor, a member of the Sanhedrin, a very godly man and one who had believed in Jesus Christ but because of his sinful fear of his people and the Jewish leaders, he had not declared his faith. But now the Son of God moves on him and he becomes courageous and goes to Pilate. Mark 15:43 says he 'went in boldly" and declared to Pilate, I want the body of Jesus, He stood right out.

Some of the Jews would have been upset that He even went into Pilate's praetorium because as we saw earlier they didn't believe that you should go into a Gentile house, But there he went right into Pilate's praetorium and asked boldly for the body of Jesus. What did he do? He counted the cost and decided to stand up for Jesus Christ and kiss off everything else. That's exactly what he wound up doing. It is an amazing thing because back in Matt 12:40 the Bible says that Jesus made the statement that ",..as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," So Jesus had to be in the earth three days.

Now I was a Wednesday man for a long time on the crucifixion, but the last month I've been converted! I believe now Jesus was crucified on Friday. I'm still open to possibility, but I believe that Jesus was crucified on Friday. Let me show you why.

To the Jewish mind a day and a night is a single unit. Any part of that day or part of that night constitutes the whole. Therefore the point is not that He had to be in there three whole days and three whole nights; but to the Jew that is a unit and any part of one of those units constitutes the unit. So it is that Jesus then must be buried in the earth before the Sabbath begins to constitute a part of that day so that there will be three days, the Friday, the Saturday, and then the Sunday as it is a part of that day and He rises from the grave, This is as close as we can get to the understanding of why

Joseph did what he did. He was in a hurry. Why? Because he had to get Jesus in that grave while it was still Friday because the Sabbath began in the evening when the sun went down. So he's in a hurry. Joseph becomes God's instrument fulfilling the prophecy of Christ's burial not only with the rich but making sure that Jesus gets buried so that He can be three days in the grave and still rise on the day that God has designed for Him to rise. So Jesus while He's dead does for Joseph what He couldn't do when He was alive, He brings an open confession from Joseph. So Joseph is in a big hurry. He wants to get Jesus buried before nightfall because it's the Sabbath. God wants Him buried before nightfall because God wants Him there three days.

So Joseph, subjected to the control of Jesus Christ, moves to get the body of Jesus.

John 19 Now some women helped him, and they took Jesus off the cross. In verse 39 we meet another person, Here's another secret disciple. All of them are coming out of the woodwork, and they are very, very wellknown people, Verse 39. "And there came also Nicodemus,..." Remember him? John 3, he came to Jesus by night and said, What do I have to do to get into the Kingdom? And Jesus told him how to be born again. He was a secret disciple. Evidently somewhere along the line between John 3 and John 19 he got saved, He believed, so now he shows up. He's rich, too; and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, That's used to sprinkle the body. They were aromatic spices, the myrrh being liquid likely and the aloes being a kind of groundup wood powder. He had a hundredpound weight, or maybe in our measurements 72 pounds that's a lot, This shows he was wealthy and also shows he thought greatly of Jesus because that would be what would normally be used to bury a king, that much. So here comes Nicodemus, Here are two great leaders. in the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus may have been the number one teacher in Israel. So here are two men who are counting the cost, eliminating their whole life, all their friends, all their society, the whole of Judaism, to take their stand for Jesus Christ and do it publicly. They counted the cost, and they chose Christ, and so they come. Then in verse 40 it says, "Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

Jews did not embalm; Egyptians did, Jews did not, They did not mummify. They simply wrapped each limb separately and the torso separately; and while they were wrapping it with bandages as it were, they sprinkled in the myrrh and the aloes as just a kind of aromatic addition to preserve the odor for just a little while, even until the body would be laid in the grave and just as a sign of care and concern for that body. So they were busy winding it and so forth and putting in the spices. Evidently they never got quite done. They were in such a hurry to get that body in there before the Sabbath that they put the body in not completed. We know that because on Sunday when the ladies came back they came and they brought with them what? spices, For what reason? Evidently to go in and continue the sprinkling of Christ to complete the burial situation.

They had not had time, evidently, because of the hurry to get Christ into that tomb and ' to have it closed before the Sabbath began. Thus they came again on Sunday,' They could not come on the

Sabbath for it was not according to law to walk that far nor to work in that fashion, so they waited until the Sunday and they came with their spices.

So they hurried to take care of this, Verse 41, "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid," Right where He was crucified, there is a garden. If you have been to Israel and you've been to Jerusalem and you stood up on that, you can stand right at the Garden Tomb and you can look right up and see the Hill of the Skull. It's not 30 seconds down, Just to make sure God had Jesus crucified here, He had a nice garden built right here. God in His sovereignty made sure a guy named Joseph put a tomb in there, a brand new one that nobody ever laid in. After all, Jesus was only going to borrow it for three days, It wasn't a permanent situation anyway. He needed that tomb for only three days, and it could be free for Joseph any time he needed it, I tell you, friends, have you ever thought' about that? There's no sense in investing a lot of money in your plot; it's only temporary if you're a Christian. I mean, it's just a thing where you're going to be there for a while and Jesus is going to take you out. It would be a shame for you to spend thousands of dollars to stick yourself in there and a few weeks later Jesus came, How are you going to get your money's worth? Now I don't know after the Rapture if they're going to check around and see which graves they can use again, but there's no sense investing a lot of money in yours, Jesus needed to borrow it, not really to keep it for very long, Three days and He would be out, And He wouldn't even decay in there

For thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption, the Psalmist said and indeed it is true, So they took Jesus to that new, beautiful garden sepulcher. That's probably the greatest thrill you'll ever have if you go to Israel is to stand and see that place.

Incidentally, it's empty. Verse 42, "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews, preparation day;..." Why does he say that? To show you that they're in a hurry because it's the day before Sabbath, "for the sepulcher was nigh (near) at hand." If the sepulcher had been three miles away, they wouldn't have made it. It had to be right there so they could get Jesus in in time and they got Him in. They laid Him there.

Don't you see something here that's fantastic? Don't you see that Jesus is controlling every step of His burial, that Jesus has moved into the life of Joseph and Nicodemus to bring them out to accomplish this just in time so that He can fulfill the prophecy, the three days He shall be there? My friends, it's one thing to control your dying; it's something else to control your burial,

Thirdly, the great climax. He not only controlled His dying and His burial, He controlled His resurrection. The Psalmist said in Psalm 16:9. the great prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and there are others in the Old Testament, but this one says, "Therefore my heart ia glad, and my glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Sheol); neither wilt thou suffer (permit) thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path. of life:.,," That's the promise of the Old Testament that the Messiah would rise again, that God would not let His Holy One see corruption but that He would come again and see life. The prophecy of the resurrection, You say, Will He fulfill that prophecy? Absolutely, To break death's power and to create life again is the ultimate in conquering death. Notice how it happens, and we'll look quickly at John 20:1 This is just narrative, so we'll read it down, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early,...." She came with the others evidently, only she came first, earlier; the others, later, with spices to finish the job.

The first day she came, and it was still dark. "unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus love that's John, He always likes to call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved, That's good, "and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him."

Here comes Mary Magdalene, that lady of whom Jesus had cast out seven devils, She came, and the stone was rolled back, We know from Matthew what happened. There was an earthquake and an angel rolled it back. Jesus was gone, and she thought maybe the Jews had stolen His body to add some further indignity, or maybe the ghouls had robbed His grave; but the tomb was empty. She didn't know what to think. She didn't believe He was resurrected for she said, We don't know where they laid Him, She thought He was still dead, She has great love but weak faith. When Peter and John heard this, they moved. Verse 3 says, "Peter therefore went forth,..." which may be a commentary on Peter's life, most of the time without thinking. Peter spent his whole life going forth; the Lord spent half the time pulling him back. "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple,..." They took off "and came to the sepulcher." Now they met the woman on the way evidently according to the other gospels. Verse 4 says, "So they ran both together:.,," When they met those women they really took off, running, "and the other disciple did outrun Peter,..." John wants us not only to be reminded that he's faster than Peter, that's not the point. I don't think John's got an ego trip, but I do think that John is simply indicating to us that John was younger than Peter was. Peter was older, and he got there last. But John runs, and he gets there first to the tomb. And I love this. "And he stopping down, and looking in,..." He was a little bit afraid, so he just kind of stopped down and looked in. "saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in," He's a little timid. He just looked in. Now look at this. He saw the linen clothes lying, That word ?? is fantastic, In the Greek that means they were undisturbed in their proper place, they were not scattered all over the place. If grave robbers had come, likely they would have picked Him up with the linen clothes on Him and too. Him that way. They wouldn't carry Him around naked and take all the time to unwrap Him if they were going to steal His body, If indeed they did desire to unwrap Him, they would have ripped those grave clothes off of Him, But there they are, lying perfectly undisturbed in the place where they originally were. The arms, the legs, torso, just perfectly lying there. You say, What happened? Jesus just lifted Himself out of those grave clothes.

You know He had that power because later on when He appeared after His resurrection, He appeared to the disciples, They were in a room, and He came through the wall, You remember He said, Peace be unto you. It's no wonder, If you were in a room and somebody came through a wall, somebody would need to say "Peace" to you, too. Anyway, Jesus came right through the wall, Here is His resurrection body; He has the ability to do that, He just simply lying there, transported Himself through the grave clothes; and they were lying wholly undisturbed in the place appointed for them. John saw that. But then watch what happens to Peter. "Then cometh Simon Peter,..," Here comes Peter down the little slope to the tomb, and Peter doesn't stop for anything. "Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher,,," Right by John? into the sepulcher. "and seeth the linen clothes lie (lying there),,,," There you have the same term again, be reminded it means wholly undisturbed in their proper place. That's fantastic. Jesus had lifted Himself out. There is no struggle, no rush, no scattered linen, just perfectly lying there, Then verse 7 is a powerful verse, "And the napkin (cloth), that was about his head, not lying. with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

You say, Why does he detail that? Don't you see that if the grave clothes had been here and the head napkin had been right beside it, it would have been just one testimony to Christ's resurrection, that He lifted Himself out? Where is the guarantee that He's really alive physically? It's the guarantee of the fact that He took the napkin that was about His head and gently folded it and set it in another place. Why did He do that?

Not only did the grave clothes testify of His resurrection but the linen cloth testified that it was a bodily resurrection, He with His own hands folded His own napkin and set it aside, double testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, So the evidence is pretty conclusive, An empty tomb, an absent Christ? undisturbed grave clothes, a napkin lying apart, a stone rolled away every bit of that cries Resurrection, doesn't it? Every bit of it. And John got the message in verse 8, I love it, "Then went in also that other disciple,..." John got brave and finally got in there. "and he saw, and what? believed." He believed, Dear John, he believed. You know we always kind of knock Thomas because Jesus said to him, You've seen and believed. Blessed is he which hath not seen, yet believed. Don't knock that. John did the same thing, John didn't believe in the resurrection until he saw it. The Bible says, John believed. Luke says, Peter wondered, John was convinced; Peter was scratching his head. The Bible says, Luke said, Peter went away wondering?

Now you are here this morning. Some of you believe. Some of you may be believing right now. Others of you are going to go away wondering, You're going to say, Is that all true? I pray God that what happened to Peter will happen to you before the day is over, that you will believe. But John believed. Then he explains why it was that he had to see to believe. Verse 9. "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead," He says, We admit we didn't understand the prophecies of resurrection. We didn't really plug in real good to Psalm 16, Psalm 110, Psalm 118, Isaiah 53:11 Old Testament prophecies of resurrection, We just didn't really see those, and we had to

see it before we got the evidence, John says, But when I saw it, I believed.

What about you? You've got the evidence, You've got the prophecies of the Old Testament. You've got the statement of the New Testament. You've got a resurrected Christ, You've got the grave clothes, the empty tomb, the rolledaway stone, you've got the whole shot. You've got it all, all that's needed for you to believe, it's all there. Do you believe? Or are you going to go away wondering?

The apostle Paul said this, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be what? saved." It's a matter of believing in the resurrection. Do you believe? I pray God you believe.

My friends., you have just seen the Death Conqueror. The passage closes by saying, "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home." (John 19:10)

They had seen the risen evidence. They were soon to see the risen Christ. I pray God that you believe, that you won't go away doubting but that you'll agree with the evidence and with John and your faith will be real and you'll claim the wonderful promise of Jesus who said this, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me? though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, Do we fear death? We say with Paul, O death, where is thy sting? Jesus Christ has given us the victory.

Let us pray, Father, we thank You,with all of our hearts we thank You for the resurrection of Christ. We thank You for the cross which is the bearing of our sins and for the resurrection which is our resurrection to newness of life. Lord Christ, we say to You, Thank You, too. Thank You for loving us enough to bring to us that resurrected life by faith, Father, we thank You that the resurrection is with evidence, that there were over 500 witnesses who agreed that Jesus., Who was dead, came alive and that Father, this is the basis of our faith that because He lives we shall live also and that by faith in Him we inherit His resurrection life and that someday, though this body may fall, our souls will be released to Thy eternal Presence in life abundant and eternal. Father, we would pray that no one would leave this place this morning who has not come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and believed in their heart; and then, Father, that they would be willing to confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, May this be a day of resurrection, We pray in the name of our resurrected Christ, Amen.

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